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FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9672
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 2182
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 0268
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0280
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 0766
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0582
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 0275
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0443
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC PRIORITY
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 2589
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1968
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000634

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SUBJECT: KYRGYZ CIVIL SOCIETY SPLIT, BUT SEEKS COHESION

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Classified By: Ambassador Marie L. Yovanovitch, Reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: A widening schism has formed in the Kyrgyz NGO community, according to two of its main activists. Seeking to reunify, civil society leaders are reaching out to others -- including the EU, OSCE, and the U.S. -- for help, and both activists said they considered U.S. action in Kyrgyzstan to be the model for assistance. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) In a meeting with the Ambassador on May 24, civil society activists Cholpon Jakupova and Asiya Sasykbayeva said that the government has successfully split civil society over the issue of whether NGOs should participate in "political activity." The two said they are virtually isolated, since a difficult March meeting when most of the NGO community declared that NGOs should not be "political." They noted, however, that there is a highly subjective metric to what their counterparts consider political; demonstrating against the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, for example, was not considered "political," whereas demonstrating against President Bakiyev in April was considered political.

13. (C) Jakupova and Sasykbayeva said that the split in civil society mirrors the split in opposition. However, they were concerned that, whereas before a united civil society was able to successfully take on former President Akayev, now no force exists in Kyrgyzstan to counter the increasingly totalitarian tendencies of the Bakiyev government.

EU TAKES A BACKSEAT TO U.S. ON DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

14. (C) During a recent trip to Germany, to discuss the EU's

new strategy on Central Asia, Jakupova and Sasykbayeva perceived a lack of European interest in addressing issues of human rights and democratic development in Central Asia. Rather, according to them, EU interlocutors were focused only on the growing energy markets in Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan.

They urged EU representatives to focus on human rights and democracy, and cited the U.S. as an example to model. They explained that it is especially urgent to support civil society now, as democratic rights are being undermined just at the point when NGOs are losing unity and the ability to fight back. Ambassador noted that she would convey their thoughts to Washington regarding the EU strategy as U.S. officials meet frequently with EU representatives.

FEARS OF SEPARATION AND PERSECUTION

15. (C) Jakupova and Sasykbayeva said that the State Security Service (GKNB) has continued harassment of those implicated for their involvement during the April demonstrations. Both Jakupova and Sasykbayeva were questioned by the GKNB upon their return from Germany, and feared additional persecution.

16. (C) In response to the Ambassador's request for ideas on how the U.S. could play a helpful role, both activists emphasized the importance of creating better coordination between civil society groups. The need for constructive dialogue was highlighted, in addition to augmenting programs focused on developing political party leadership. Ambassador suggested that USAID's new civil society project and new political party project could help. She also noted that like-minded Ambassadors in Bishkek meet frequently and she would convey their concerns and seek coordinated actions, although the latter was often difficult to do, she warned.

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COMMENT

17. (C) While we are not as pessimistic about the situation in Kyrgyzstan as Sasykbayeva and Jakupova, we, too, have noticed a split in the NGO community. Working through our contacts and assistance programs, we will seek ways to shore up our NGO counterparts, but the hard work of reuniting on the issues is something only the Kyrgyz themselves can do.
YOVANOVITCH